Frequently Asked Questions about the Tennessee Fire Incident Reporting System (TFIRS)

FAQ Chapter 1: Introduction

What is TFIRS?
TFIRS (pronounced 'TEE-FURS') is the Tennessee branch of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS, pronounced 'IN-FURS'). NFIRS uses a combination of internet, pc and database software to collect, store, and analyze fires and other emergencies according to a set of standard classifications for incident reporting and fire protection data. Reports submitted to NFIRS are automatically forwarded to TFIRS. NFIRS is managed by the U S Fire Administration (USFA), a unit of the Federal Emergency Management Agency(FEMA) in the U S Department of Homeland Security(DHS).

Who do I contact if I need help on TFIRS?
Contact Dennis Mulder, TFIRS Coordinator at (615) 532-5753, M-F, 7:00 AM – 3:30 PM Central or at Dennis.Mulder@tn.gov

Do we have to report to TFIRS?
Yes. State law requires all fire departments to report every fire to the Fire Marshal's Office within ten days of occurrence (Tenn. Code Ann. § 68-102-111). We request all incident types so that your department gets credit for all you do. Also FEMA Fire Act Grant recipients are required to report all incidents to NFIRS for at least one year.

How do we report to TFIRS?
You have two free options. You may use the NFIRS Data Entry Tool, which requires download and installation of an application. Or you may use the NFIRS Data Entry Browser Interface(DEBI), which is web-based and does not require download and installation. In either case, you must have an active user account to login. If you are not sure about your account status, contact the TFIRS Coordinator. If you know you have an active account, you may download the Tool by going to www.nfirs.fema.gov/users. If you want to use DEBI, just go to www.nfirs.fema.gov/webtools and click on the link Report Incidents(DEBI). If your operating system is Windows Vista or Windows 7, you will need to make additional adjustments to run the Tool. See additional information on both reporting options at http://www.tennessee.gov/commerce/sfm/onlineResHome.shtmlwebpage .

Can I use commercial software to report to TFIRS?
Yes, but you must first export your data. Data is not automatically exported and uploaded to NFIRS. After exporting, upload the data using the NFIRS Bulk Import Utility(BIU). See additional information on the BIU at http://www.tennessee.gov/commerce/sfm/onlineResHome.shtmlwebpage .

What are the System Requirements for TFIRS?

The NFIRS Data Entry Tool system requirement minimums are:

200 MHZ CPU Pentium Class
64 MB of RAM
20 MB available disk space
800 x 600 Monitor Resolution
28.8 Kbps modem

The NFIRS DEBI system requirements are:

- Minimum browser version: Internet Explorer Version 6 or above. Firefox 3.5 or above.
- The PC must have session cookies enabled. Non-persistent (or session cookies), are used for login authentication.
- The PC must have frames enabled to view all components of the web tools.
- Adobe Acrobat Reader to view and save reports.
- Optimal settings for NFIRS Web SORT and DEBI applications:
  o Screen resolution set to 1280 X 1024 pixels or 1280 X 768 pixels
  o Text size: "Medium"
  o DPI Setting: Normal (96 DPI)
  o Users with DPI setting higher than 96 may experience screen layout issues which can be avoided by using a text size setting of "Smaller".
  o Users with screen resolution less than 1024 X 768 pixels will experience some screen layout issues as the browser may rearrange the way fields are displayed. The minimum setting from a NFIRS user experience perspective is 1024 X 768 pixels with text size "Medium"

How do I get statistics like average response time by incident type?
To get an accurate picture of what your department is doing you may find the NFIRS Summary Output Report Tool(SORT) helpful. The most useful reports you can run are Incident Listing, Monthly Incident Count and Detailed Selected Stats & Management Activity. The Incident Listing lists all your calls by incident number, the Monthly Incident Count totals your calls by month, and the Management Activity report calculates average response times, average personnel and total time spent on calls. To start the SORT, open www.nfirs.fema.gov . Select Web-based Tools from the menu bar. Select Summary Output Reports Tool and log in. See additional information on the SORT at http://www.tennessee.gov/commerce/sfm/onlineResHome.shtmlwebpage .

What is Microsoft Access 97 (or Access 2000, Access 2002 FoxPro 6.0, MS SQL Server 7.0 or 2000)?
These are database programs. The NFIRS 5.0 application can use one of these programs as the database engine to manage and store the data entered in the Off-Line mode. If the user wishes to work in the Off-Line mode, one of these programs must be installed on the PC. Access 97 and Access 2000 are used most often as the Off-line database engine. The database program must be installed prior to installing NFIRS 5.0 application. The Data Entry Validation Tool Guide and the Readme.txt provide complete details (http://nfirs.fema.gov/users/usersdocs.shtm).

FAQ Chapter 2: Common problems

What do I do if I forget my password?
Contact the TFIRS Coordinator at Dennis.Mulder@tn.gov or at (615)532-5753.

How often do I have to change my password?
The User will be prompted to change their password every ninety days. Passwords can be changed prior to the 90 days. Passwords must be from 8 to 15 characters long (inclusive) and alphanumeric with no less than one letter and one number. Spaces and special characters are allowed and the password is not case sensitive. Login to the NFIRS Data Entry Tool and Select Change Password under the Advanced tab in the Data Entry Tool. You may also change the password without using the Change Password Utility. Go to www.nfirs.fema.gov and select Web-based Tools from the menu bar. Select User Services. Select Change Password Utility. Log in and follow the directions.

I cannot login On-Line. I am a registered user with an active password. I keep receiving the "User Not Found … Please Reenter" message.
Has it been more than 45 days since your last login? You must login at least once every 45 days or your account will be automatically de-activated. Are you entering TN. as the state? TN without a period is the correct user state.

How do I know if I am using the most current version of the USFA NFIRS 5.0 software?
Your TFIRS Coordinator can assist in identifying if the version of the USFA software on the PC is the most current. The 5.0 in NFIRS 5.0 is a system number, which is followed by the Software Version number, for example: Version 5.0 Version 5.8.1. The Program File folder in the root directory will reflect the software version number, for example: NFIRSv58.

What is the difference between Off-Line and On-Line?
Off-Line means the user is entering their incidents data into a Microsoft Access database on your computer. On-Line means the user enters the incident data directly into the National database while connected through the Internet.

How do I change from Off-line to On-line?
Open the Configuration Tool and click on the Advanced Tab. Check the box for On-Line database. Click Save...OK...Exit. See Configuration Tool User's Guide for more information. It's available at http://nfirs.fema.gov/users/usersdocs.shtm .

I cannot login Off-Line. I keep receiving User Not Found...Please Reenter message.
The user must complete a User Injection and Remote Synchronization before login Off-Line. Refer to Section 2.3 of the Data Entry Validation Tool Guide for instructions or to Section 3, Off-line Database Setup, for complete details(http://nfirs.fema.gov/users/usersdocs.shtm).

When I enter the Data Entry Tool, my FDID Number is correct but it says FDID not found.
The name of your department has not been entered in the system. Click on Fire Dept from the Menu bar and click on New Department. Here you will enter the Fire Department's Name and information. Click OK and the department information will be saved and the department name will be displayed.

Can I enter my incidents Off-Line and then send them periodically to the National Database? If so, how?
Yes; use the Import/Export Tool which is located under the Tools tab in the Data Entry Tool. See Section 8.12 of the Data Entry Tool Guide for full details. It's available at http://nfirs.fema.gov/users/usersdocs.shtm . Departments using commercial software should use the Bulk Import Utility (BIU) to upload their data. Contact the Coordinator for more information.

How can I tell if the incidents were sent successfully?
Users may verify their incident data was sent successfully by logging in On-Line to the National database. Click on Incident from the Menu bar and then Open Incident. The Incident Search window will be displayed. Click on Search to search all incidents or narrow the search criteria by entering specific search requirements. BIU users will receive confirmation by email.

What do the yellow fields represent?
These are fields defined as National required fields. These fields must be completed in order for the incident to pass validation.

If a call is cancelled en route, what Incident Type should I enter?
Incident Type 611, "Dispatched and cancelled en route." An Actions Taken code of 93, cancelled en route, should also be entered. If you have questions about an individual incident and which codes to use to accurately report it, contact the TFIRS Coordinator.

Can I print a copy of an incident?
Yes, a Forms Based Incident Report (FBIR) can be generated and printed, one incident at a time, in either the On-line or Off-line mode. Refer to Section 8.11 of the Data Entry Tool Users' Guide for the complete instructions (http://nfirs.fema.gov/users/usersdocs.shtm). An FBIRS or range of FBIRs may also be generated online at www.nfirs.fema.gov/webtools/userservices/ .   See additional information on the FBIR Utility at
http://www.tennessee.gov/commerce/sfm/onlineResHome.shtmlwebpage .

Comments or questions on TFIRS?
E-mail them to:
Dennis.Mulder@tn.gov